

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 8, 2016

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. [Empowerment Act](#) submitted to General Assembly, posted on RIDE website
2. [Advanced Coursework Network](#) registration opens
3. R.I. receives grant to support [career-readiness](#), skills for youth
4. LEAs urged to celebrate the [Month of the Military Child](#)
5. South Kingstown Supt. Stringfellow receives [Foreign Language Association](#) advocacy award
6. R.I. principal receives [Digital Leader](#) award
7. [Assistant Principals](#) recognized for contributions to school, student success
8. Study finds [CTE](#) coursework improves on-time graduation likelihood

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)

Certification:

9. LEAs notified of new attestation required for renewal of [emergency applications](#)

School Construction:

10. Statewide [facilities assessment](#) continuing; LEAs asked to designate contact by **April 15 – Action Item**

Instruction:

11. [CS4RI](#) sets professional-development dates

From other organizations

12. Rhode Island [Law Day](#) classroom program, essay contest announced
13. Blackstone Academy to hold program for students on [service learning](#), social action

Action Item Calendar

April 15 – Facilities-assessment contact named (see [below](#))
April 22 – [Student Advisory Council](#) selections due
June 20 – Reports on [interventions](#) due

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. Empowerment Act submitted to General Assembly, posted on RIDE website

As you are aware, Governor Raimondo has submitted to the General Assembly as part of her budget proposal the School and Family Empowerment Act. This Act provides schools, on a voluntary basis, a process through which they could become an Empowerment School. Empowerment Schools may, depending on their locally developed and approved empowerment plan, attain autonomy for their principals and teacher-leaders to make decisions about how to run their school, freedom from most state regulations, school-based contract flexibility through an MOU to the district contract, and the possibility of opening their doors to enrollment of students from other communities.

We have posted the text of the Act on our website:

www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Inside-RIDE/Empowerment/School-and-Family-Empowerment-Act-FinalDraft-3-29-16.pdf .

We are in the process of drafting a set of Frequently Asked Questions about the Empowerment Act, which we will post on our site as well.

2. Advanced Coursework Network registration opens

The Advanced Coursework Network is now open for student registration for the fall of 2016. Students can select from 120 credit-bearing courses, with an additional 85 courses anticipated in the spring of 2017. The courses, offered by 14 provider organizations, include advanced science and mathematics courses as well as Advanced Placement courses, courses in world languages, career-focused courses, and Prepare RI courses that offer other both high-school and postsecondary credit (i.e., dual or concurrent enrollment).

The Advanced Coursework Network is designed to help Rhode Island schools create opportunities for students to identify, pursue, and follow their individual educational pathways. Enriching experiences with advanced coursework will help students get a head start on postsecondary success, master the skills required of a lifelong learner, and be prepared for jobs in sectors critical to the future prosperity of Rhode Island. Dual-enrollment courses can also help high-school students reduce the time and the cost of attaining a postsecondary certificate or degree.

Registration and information for students, families, and schools, including complete course lists, are posted, on the R.I. Department of Education website, at

www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework.

We will publicly announce the Network opening within the next few days.

3. R.I. receives grant to support career-readiness, skills for youth

On Monday, Governor Raimondo announced that Rhode Island has secured a \$100,000 grant to develop a detailed career-readiness action plan, an essential step to expanding economic opportunity for young people across the state.

“To prepare our kids for success in the workforce of tomorrow, we have to do everything we can to ensure that Rhode Island high-school graduates build the skills that matter for jobs and careers that pay,” Raimondo said. “We are pleased and grateful to receive the New Skills for Youth planning grant, which will help us focus and advance our efforts toward aligning our career-and-technical system with the most

rapidly growing fields in the Rhode Island economy. This work will benefit Rhode Island students, families, and the business and industry community.”

Rhode Island will use this planning grant to help ensure that:

- career-and-technical education programs in the state are aligned with industry standards, so that students will graduate from these programs with industry-recognized credentials, ready to begin their careers;
- Rhode Island continues to expand and develop career-preparation programs in the areas most likely to grow in the Rhode Island economy; and
- experts with strong experience and expertise in various business and industry fields will have pathways through which they could receive certification in order to teach students in career-technical programs.

Rhode Island is among 24 states and the District of Columbia that secured grants for this work through phase one of [New Skills for Youth](#) grant opportunity. The grants are one piece of [a \\$75 million, five-year initiative](#) developed by JPMorgan Chase in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education, and Advance CTE, a national nonprofit that represents state directors and leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary, and adult Career Technical Education (CTE). The initiative is aimed at increasing economic opportunity for young people by strengthening career-focused education starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees or credentials aligned with business needs.

Rhode Island families are eager for career-technical education programs that prepare their children for postsecondary education, careers, the workforce, and life. The New Skills for Youth grant will enable us to develop a detailed action plan to help our high-school students attain the skills and knowledge they will need to excel in the 21st-century job market and to contribute to the Rhode Island economy.

4. LEAs urged to celebrate the Month of the Military Child

Middletown Supt. Rosemarie Kraeger writes to remind us that this is the Month of the Military Child. During April, the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) along with many other organizations, nonprofits, and public entities will underscore the important role children play in the armed-forces community.

Rosemarie writes that:

Our military children and families help sustain our fighting force, on whom we depend for the security and safety of our nation's families and communities. It is important to emphasize and recognize the role that military children play while their service member parents are serving the nation. The MIC3 is committed to resolving the educational transition issues that are faced by these children and their families.

April 15 is "Purple Up! For Military Kids" day. Across the nation, people are being encouraged to show support for our military and veteran children and to thank them for their strength and sacrifices. Please check for events in your area for celebrating during this month.

Please take time this month to recognize the service of our military members and their families — and especially their children. They deserve our support!

Rosemarie has written a message on this topic, which appears in the Newport Daily News:

newportdailynews.ri.newsmemory.com/publink.php?shareid=0dea75d11.

5. South Kingstown Supt. Stringfellow receives Foreign Language Association advocacy award

The Rhode Island Foreign Language Association has awarded the Norma Garnett Advocacy Award to South Kingstown Supt. Kristen Stringfellow, Ed.D., and has named Cynthia Teixeira, of Coventry High School, as the Teacher of the Year. The association has also selected Rachel Williams, of the Hope Valley Elementary School (Chariho; teacher, Dori Carpenter) and Cameron Chadronet, of the Lawn Avenue Middle School (Jamestown; teacher, Michaela Onosko) as the poster-contest winners. The association will honor these and other award recipients at its spring dinner on April 28.

6. R.I. principal receives Digital Leader award

The National Association of Elementary School Principals, in partnership with VINCI Education, has named Dr. Carrie McWilliams, Lower School Principal at the Paul Cuffee School, as one of five national recipients of a Digital Leader of Early Learning Award. The award commends Dr. McWilliams for embracing “innovative educational-technology practices that support the early learner.” Dr. McWilliams and the four other principals receiving the award at the Association “Better Practices for Better Schools” conference in July. Congratulations, Carrie!

7. Assistant Principals recognized for contributions to school, student success

We join with our colleagues at the Rhode Island Association of School Principals to commend the many amazing Assistant Principals in Rhode Island on the occasion of National Assistant Principals Week (April 11 through 15). Assistant Principals play multiple roles in our schools, contributing greatly to staff development, instructional leadership, curriculum development, business management, and very often as a direct liaison to students, families, and the community. As we provide opportunities for greater school empowerment and educator autonomy, Assistant Principals will be part of the leadership teams that will play a key role in re-imagining our schools and preparing our students for success postsecondary education and in challenging careers. Thank you for the work you do in our schools every day.

8. Study finds CTE coursework improves on-time graduation likelihood

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute has published a study that shows that “disadvantaged” students are not tracked in large numbers to career-technical programs and that students who take three or more related career-technical courses improve their chance of graduating on time from high school. The study – “Career and Technical Education in High School: Does it improve student outcomes?” – is posted here:

<http://edexcellence.net/publications/career-and-technical-education-in-high-school-does-it-improve-student-outcomes>

You can read an article on this study in Education Week here (subscription may be required):

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/2016/04/study_finds_no_tracking_big_graduation_boost_in_career_tech_focus.html

From RIDE

Certification:

9. LEAs notified of new attestation required for renewal of emergency applications

LEAs requesting to renew first-issuance emergency preliminary applications for educators should be aware of all renewal requirements. Emergency-renewal applications now include a renewal attestation to be completed by an educator-preparation provider. The attestation ensures that the educator has begun the necessary coursework that will allow her or him to attain full certification. The attestation may be a signature in Section C of the emergency application, a letter from the institution stating acceptance into the program, or an Entrance-Exit Assessment document. Please note that all educators with emergency certificates should review their correspondence within the eCert system for their unique renewal requirements.

School Construction:

10. Statewide facilities assessment continuing; LEAs asked to designate contact by April 15 – *Action Item*

The School Building Authority at RIDE has as one of its responsibilities management of a system with a goal of ensuring equitable and adequate school housing for all public-school students. To help achieve

this goal, we have engaged an educational-facility planning team, Jacobs, to conduct a statewide facility-condition assessment and to create a statewide master plan that will direct long-range capital planning for improvement efforts and investment across the state. The first round of school-facility visits has been completed and [Jacobs anticipates deploying assessment teams for the second round per the schedule posted on RIDE's site.](#) The assessments will be completed in phases, so multiple visits to your community will be scheduled.

If you have not done so already, please provide a point of contact to Jessica.Caffey@jacobs.com by Friday, **April 15**. The point of contact will coordinate directly with Jacobs regarding the school visits. Please anticipate hearing from a Jacobs representative to resolve any questions specific to your LEA and to distribute an assessment schedule in advance of the teams' visiting your schools.

If you have any questions about this facilities assessment, please contact Joseph da Silva, Ph.D., at 222-4294 or joseph.dasilva@ride.ri.gov.

Instruction:

11. CS4RI sets professional-development dates

Important information and dates have been scheduled for Computer Science for Rhode Island (CS4RI) professional-learning opportunities for educators in elementary, middle and high schools. This information will be updated as additional dates are scheduled:

- [Important CS4RI Dates for Elementary and Middle Schools](#)
- [Important CS4RI Dates for High Schools](#)

For additional information, visit <http://www.CS4RI.org>.

From other organizations

12. **Rhode Island Law Day classroom program, essay contest announced**

On Rhode Island Law Day, thousands of Rhode Island students, teachers, judges, and lawyers share important, timely, and lively law-related education lessons. This year's Rhode Island Law Day is Friday, **April 29**. Rhode Island Law Day classroom program lessons are open to all Rhode Island middle and upper schools' 7th- to 12th-grade classes, and feature in-school, classroom-period participation of a Rhode Island judge and lawyer team. To promote active student participation and the best possible educational experience, the Rhode Island Law Day classroom program topic choice focuses on an issue of direct relevance to students.

Additionally, the Rhode Island Judiciary, the Rhode Island Bar Association, and the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association are pleased to announce the 2016 *Hon. Francis J. Darigan, Jr., Rhode Island Law Day Essay Contest*. The contest is open to all Rhode Island 10th- and 11th-grade students. Through the generosity of the Rhode Island Bar Association and the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, the winning essay author will receive a \$1000 Scholastic Award and an engraved trophy cup. The winner's school receives a permanent plaque and the annual Law Day Essay Award Trophy to display until the next Contest. This year, a second-place essay author will also be recognized with a \$250 Scholastic Award donated by the Edward P. Gallogly Family Law Inns of Court.

For information on Rhode Island Law Day and on the 2016 Law Day Essay Contest, see:

<https://www.ribar.com/For%20the%20Public/Law%20Related%20Education/2016lawday.aspx>

13. Blackstone Academy to hold program for students on service learning, social action

Blackstone Academy, an independent charter high school, has been selected by Youth Service America to host the Rhode Island Global Youth Service Day. All middle- and high-school students involved in service learning and social action or wanting to learn how to get involved are invited to attend. This celebratory event will take place on Saturday, **April 16**, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Some funds for transportation for school or youth groups are available. The event is free, and breakfast and lunch are included. For more information and to register go to:

www.blackstoneacademy.org.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>